GUARDI 1712-1793
CANALETTO 1720-17SO

1 *February*

Back from Berlin on SO January. Miserably wasted the first two days. Yesterday I catch hold of myself and do not go to bed before having written the beginning of *UEnfant prodigueJ*

This morning I forbid myself to go out. I begin by working. This is the way to do, and any other system is absurd. A still very distracted afternoon, but not without interest. Useless to go on noting my occupations and encounters. I must record here my "concentrations" and not my distractions. On the way, read with great profit the beginning of Dupouey's *Vie de Rossetti;* alas, badly written.

6 *February*

Have forsaken this notebook the last few days, but for the sake of work. I am composing an *Enfant prodigue,* in which I am trying to make a dialogue of my spiritual reticences and impulses.

This morning, from Claudel, a letter full of a sacred wrath, against the epoch, against Gourmont, Rousseau, Kant, Renan. . * . Holy wrath no doubt, but wrath all the same and just as painful to my mind as the barking of a dog is to my ear. I cannot endure it and cover my ears at once. But I hear it nevertheless and then have trouble getting back to work.

9 *February*

Valery will never know how much friendship it costs me to listen to his conversation without an outburst. I go away black and blue all over. Yesterday I spent almost three hours with him. Afterward nothing was left standing in my mind.

Going out with me, he accompanied me to the Bois de Boulogne. I had taken my skates, which had been lying in a

packing-case for the last ten years, and, to my surprise, I didn't find them too rusty on the ice. Valery did not leave me an instant; I suffered to see him waiting for me, so that I hardly skated at all. Leaving there with him, I abandoned him in front of the Charles Gides*, where I went up to get news of Gerard.

And, of course, impossible to work this evening. After such a "conversation" everything in my head is in a state of havoc.

Val&y's conversation throws me into this *frightful* alternative: either consider everything he says absurd or else consider absurd every-

[7] *Le Retour de Tenfant prodigue (The Prodigdfs Return),* a short prose poem, is one of Gide's most beautiful works, It was first published by *V&rs et Prose* in 1907.